St Petersburg 1 Jany 1840

To Mr Levi Janvier. Corresponding Secretary of Foreign Missions
of Society of Inquiry at Princeton Seminary New Jersey U.S.

My dear Brother — A few days after I had despatched a communication for you dated 1st Jany 1839 I received your favor of 28 Nov 1838 which afforded me much pleasure — The condition of the nominally Christian population of this extensive empire is indeed deplorable, but the facilities for communicating saving knowledge are as great as we can improve. Here may be seen here & there the gleam of a star but in general the darkness is profound.

From correspondence with His Eminence Dr Melartin Archbishop of Finland it appears that there are in that province alone about 100,000 families able to read but destitute of the word of God — In the other provinces the destitution is proportionate and in Russia proper it is much greater — The number of copies of the S.S. put into circulation is annually increasing — and we know that the S.S. may make men wise unto Salvation — In this country where there are few means of preaching the glorious gospel of the blessed God — there is no other land we see more frequently the working of the truth as it is thus communicated pure as it flows from the throne of God. Some years since I heard the following anecdote of a Russian peasant whose son had been sent to school & taught to read which will illustrate the power of the word of God — One day the boy on going home from school told his father with great joy that there was a Bible on sale in their village — and entreated him to purchase one for him — After a time his father asked him how much they cost — and on learning the price which was very moderate gave him money to purchase a copy — The boy soon made his purchase & went home delighted with his treasure — and immediately began to read, but his father coming in interrupted him saying Stop. Stop. You must read to me for you know I cannot read — Well Father I will — said the boy but where shall I read? Why said the Father I have heard something about Isaiah — see if you can find any thing about him and read that. The boy began at Genesis and turned one leaf over after another till he came to the prophecies of Isaiah. Then he began to read — and his father listened attentively. In the first chapter he found some things which seemed strange to him — because they condemned what he had been taught to practise — he made however no remark — but desired his son to read to him a chapter daily. The next day he was no less surprised to hear of idols of gold — and idols of silver which men had made to worship — being cast to the moles — and to the bats — but still he said nothing. but the reading was continued daily — until at length they reached the ~~forty~~ fortieth Chapter — upon hearing which the man could restrain his feelings no longer — and rising he seized a large stick — and going toward the sacred images which are seen in all Russian houses smashed them to pieces ______ Such a proceeding could not remain long unknown and through the zeal of his persecutors he was brought before an ecclesiastical court and condemned to the knout and exile ____ This court had power to pass such a sentence — but it could only be executed by the civil authorities — and for its execution the sentence required to be countersigned by the Emperor — One of the Officers through whose hands the documents required to pass preparatory to their being laid before His Majesty felt much for the poor man — and commenced a diligent research into the laws of the Empire in hope of discovering something which would avail the condemned peasant — He found that every thing had been done orderly & legally — and that there was no want of evidence — as the man admitted that he had acted as I have stated — He pursued however his researches till he discovered an old Ukase issued by Peter the Great on the very subject — In this it was decreed that if any man should act so the priests were to meet with him — and to endeavour to bring him to repentance by convincing him of the impropriety of his conduct — That if the person remained impenitent — they should meet with again — and endeavour to convince him of his sin — That in the event of the second interview failing to produce this effect — they must meet with him a third time — deal with him — and if possible bring him to repentance — but that if the third attempt prove ineffectual that they should then let him alone" — The Ukase and sentence of Court were agreeably to custom laid before His Majesty together — who wrote as the custom is on the Margin of the Ukase "So be it" — adding — My predecessor Peter was a wise & prudent man — I therefore decree that this man be left alone — and moreover suggest to the Court — the propriety of endeavouring to gain the affections of the flock — and not by persecution driving them further astray" — This was told of his late Imperial Majesty Alexander — Though so much the order — it would not be prudent to publish it at present — but the conduct of the man seems to speak of a people prepared for the Lord — and by such events we are encouraged to go on spreading the knowledge of his will

The establishment of a Mission to the Mongol Buriats in Siberia may also be traced to the effects of the perusal of the Scriptures upon the minds of men who otherwise might never have heard of the glorious gospel of the blessed God — These poor heathens inhabiting a remote province bordering upon China — having been deeply impressed with some passages from the gospel according to Matthew — which they had seen in Calmuck — sent to St Petersburg two chiefs distinguished by their rank and intelligence — that they might procure a translation of the New Testament into their own language — In assisting a learned German scholar to translate the gospel of Matthew into Mongolian — many months were consumed and they met daily at the house of that Gentleman to collate with him the portions which each of them had translated — and they frequently proposed questions regarding the circumstances and allusions — as well as the doctrines contained in that book — these they wished to thoroughly understand correctly — that they might translate it faithfully — Whilst they were occupied with the object of their mission such was the effect produced upon the minds of these pagans by what they called the beautiful words of Jesus Christ — that when agreeably to their custom they prayed to their idols — they felt as they acknowledged a disquietude &

which they never before experienced - and they desired to be made more fully ac:
: quainted with the truths of the gospel. ___ On the last day when they
saw their work brought to a ~~[illegible]~~ higher state of perfection - as could then be
attained - these two chiefs stood for some time silent and pensive before the
MS - which they had closed & placed upon the table - Observing something
remarkable in their looks - their friend asked them if they had any questions
to propose - they replied No - and then to the great joy of their fellow-labourers
who had avoided all appearance of attempting to proselytize - declared
themselves - converted to the religion of the book they had translated. The
elder then spake as follows - and the younger signified his assent to
what was said: "We have lived in ignorance - we have been conducted
by blind guides - and we have found no rest - we have been zealous propa-
: gators of the doctrines of Shigemooni - and we have studied attentively
the books in which they are contained; but the more we have studied them
the more obscure did they appear to us - and our hearts remained unsatisfied
But in studying the doctrines of Jesus Christ - it has been the very contrary
written. The more we have meditated on these words the more intelligible
they appeared - and at last it seemed as if Jesus himself spake to us"

Nothing touched these chiefs more than those passages in which our Saviour
shewed his compassion for sinners - and invited the weary & heavy laden
to come unto him - and similar was the effect of these passages on the
young converts in Selenga shortly after their conversion in 1834 - One
of them was requested by Mr Swan at his usual Mongolian service to read
the III Chap of John - from which he purposed afterwards addressing them
himself - When the apostle came to the words "God so loved the world
that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him
should not perish but have everlasting life" his voice began to falter - and
with difficulty he read on a little further - but when he came to the words
"this is the condemnation &c" his feelings completely overcame him
and his voice was drowned in sobs and tears - Mr Swan had to finish the
reading of the chapter - and afterwards addressed the little congregation
from that remarkable passage

Though limited to but few means of spreading the knowledge of our
Lord - the recollection of such results - ~~and~~ together with what we are permitted
from time to time to see - of the efficiency of the word of the Lord in converting
the soul encourages us to sow in hope - and to cast forth the seed - ~~[illegible]~~
not knowing what shall prosper this or that or both may prove alike good -

My desire & prayers that the association with which you are connected
may have the effect of cherishing in many the desire to spend & be spent for
Christ - and that living not unto themselves but unto him - they may be led to
look to the lands of darkness - as they determine how & where they will glorify
God. From the dark places of the earth there still ascends an unceasing to the
ry - The entreaty Come over & help us - is almost drowned by the voice of lamen
tation & woe - Pray then the Lord - that he would send forth labourers - for the poor
nighted heathen are perishing by thousands - and few very few lay it to heart

with much Christian love I am My dear Brethren
Truly Yours
J. C. Brown

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Answered Aug 7. 1840

Mr Levi Janvier
Corresponding Secretary a Foreign Missions
of Society of Enquiry
at Prince town Seminary
New Jersey.
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